

1

# **GAME OF SKILL OR CHANCE PLAYABLE BY REMOTE PARTICIPANTS IN CONJUNCTION WITH A COMMON GAME EVENT INCLUDING INSERTED INTERACTIVE ADVERTISING**

The present invention is directed to a game of skill or chance playable by remote participants in conjunction with a common game event including inserted interactive advertising.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

As described in the Lockton et al. U.S. Pat. No. 4,592,546, home television viewers of a football game or other sports events or another type of TV game may play along to predict, for example, the play called by the quarterback and/or, in the case of a quiz game, to guess the correct answer along with the actual player in the TV studio. As described by the above patent, the football game, for example, is received on a normal television receiver and the interactivity with that game is made possible by a second mass communication download to the individual remote participant by either the vertical blanking interval (VBI) of a television signal or an FM (SCA) radio channel.

A major source of income for many entertainment businesses including television, radio and print media is advertising. Television advertisers especially would like to receive immediate feedback on the part of the consumer after watching an ad with a minimum of effort. Some of the feedback might involve an answer to a survey conducted by the advertiser, a quiz perhaps with a prize to test the impact of the advertisement and, most importantly, the advertiser would like to be able to capitalize on the consumer's impulse by allowing an immediate purchase.

## **OBJECT AND SUMMARY OF INVENTION**

It is, therefore, a general object of the present invention to provide a game of skill or chance playable by remote participants in conjunction with a common game event including inserted interactive advertising.

In accordance with the above object, there is provided a game of skill or chance played simultaneously by several participants remote from each other in conjunction with at least one common game where interactive advertising is inserted into the game.

Communication means provide to each participant the common game along with interactive advertising. Control unit means associated with each remote participant receive game and interactive ad inputs by such participant including keyboard means and a visual display. The control unit means includes a game data stream and an interactive ad data stream which may be selectively associated with the keyboard means and visual display. Central computer system means transmit and download game messages and interactive ad messages to all of the control unit means and receive uploaded game data and interactive ad data from the control unit means which are related to the inputs, the control unit means continuing to process both of said interactive ad and game messages on said respective data streams irrespective of which data stream said keyboard means and said display are associated with.

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS**

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a participant control unit embodying the present invention.

2

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of the central computer system embodying the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a flow chart illustrating the operation of the central computer system of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a flow chart illustrating the partial operation of the control unit of FIG. 1.

FIG. 5 is a flow chart illustrating the operation of another aspect of the control unit of FIG. 1.

FIG. 6 is a flow chart illustrating another aspect of the operation of the control unit of FIG. 1 as it interfaces with the central computer system of FIG. 2.

FIG. 7 is a flow chart illustrating the uploading of information from a control unit of FIG. 1 to the central computer system of FIG. 2.

## **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

FIG. 1 illustrates a control unit 10 which is useable and located at the location of each of the remote participants for playing a game of skill or chance; for example, football, baseball, a television game such as Wheel of Fortune or Jeopardy, or an offline specialized game specifically directed to the player or customer via the mass communication's channel provided by an FM (SCA) channel or vertical blinking interval (VBI) of a television signal or other link such as cable.

Very briefly, referring to FIG. 2, the central computer system (CCS) supervises and controls both the overall game and any interactive advertising.

In general, the present invention is applicable to any type of game of skill or chance or contest which is communicated to the local participant or user by a standard television signal, cable, satellite or other transmission technique. In one specific example as illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, which at the present time is believed to be the most typical, the participant with their central control unit 10 would have associated with it at their location a television receiver 12 which, for example, is receiving a football game. The control unit 10 which may be a separate unit or a part of the user's personal computer or a set-top box on the TV receiver 12 includes a microprocessor 13 having a memory 14, a display 16 (either liquid crystal or a cathode ray tube display) and a keyboard game input unit 17 which in addition to the keyboard might include joy stick controls, a mouse or other type of inputs. To communicate with the outside world, microprocessor 13 is linked to the telephone system via a modem 18 and to wireless communications such as VBI or FM (SCA) by the receiver 19.

Referring to FIG. 2, a game contest is controlled by the central computer system 11 which has a producer input 21 and for use by the producer a TV monitor 22. Specifically, by way of example, from a game standpoint as a football game is being monitored with the TV monitor 22 by the producer and the game of skill involves predicting the play that the quarterback calls, then the producer input 21 would provide a lockout signal downloaded, indicated by the line 23, via VBI or the FM (SCA) receiver 19 to prevent the player or participant at the control unit 10 from making a late prediction.

More importantly, the producer also controls the insertion of advertising information into any event, either a live television event or a offline event which is also being downloaded on line 23. When the common event is aired, the interactive advertisement data is synchronized with the on-air event by the human producer (or programmed